

UP A TREE WITH A PADDLE

By Joquita Burka

If you, like many of us, thought Huckleberry Finn and the Swiss Family Robinson had it made—just floating on water, living in a tree house, taking it slow and easy—this is your trip. It's a trip down the Edisto River with an overnight stay in a tree house that would be the envy of the entire Robinson clan.

Carolina Heritage Outfitters (just 45 miles from Charleston, off I-95) operates the river tour and tree house accommodations within the Edisto River Refuge. The Edisto is a blackwater river that runs through one of the most pristine natural areas in the state. Black because of the tannin secreted by the cypress trees that shelter the bank, the gently moving river flows along at about 2-to-4 mph. Don't hurry the trip. Just relax and try to spot the great blue heron, egrets, anhingas, woodduck, pileated woodpecker, wild turkey, deer, raccoon, bobcat, river otter and alligator that inhabit this area.

The 22-mile trip gives paddlers the option of overnight camping, ground cabins or the very popular tree house. Carolina Heritage Outfitters provides everything you need—cooking utensils, a gas stove, provisions for dinner and breakfast, a wall lamp and sleeping quarters for two to four people.

Sit on the porch overlooking the slowly moving water. Listen to the serenade of the frogs and owls. And imagine. Gazing at it in its unspoiled beauty, it's not hard to imagine how this land looked before anyone floated through these waters—and why they came back time after time.

If you go...

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A kayak trip along the blackwaters of the Edisto River can end with guests, literally, up a tree.